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# Great Start Squadron Guide

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## Objective

Our new members deserve a great start in CAP. The Great Start project helps to welcome and orient prospective members, and to equip them as new members to know what to do during their first year in CAP.

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## At a Glance

John wants to volunteer in his community and thinks that CAP would be a good fit with his interests. He visits your squadron and is greeted with a warm "Hello" and introduced to Dave, who guides John through a booklet entitled, *Great Start*.

After discussing the booklet with Dave, John decides to join your squadron. Dave continues to connect with John as they discuss the new member checklist on what to do during John's first year of membership.

At the end of the first year, John is excited to continue on with his training and renews. John continues to contribute back to his community through Civil Air Patrol.

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## Overview

Every squadron can easily duplicate what John and Dave did in our example above. The greeter, the Great Start booklet, the mentor and the new member checklist are all easy-to-implement elements of the Great Start project.

The main element of this project is the Great Start booklet, which answers frequently asked questions and details how we value the prospective member's experiences.

Another element of this project is the new member checklists. These checklists assist the new member to know what to accomplish during their first year of membership in CAP.

The final element of this project is the Great Start Squadron Guide. The Great Start Squadron Guide helps squadron leaders to understand the Great Start project, and how best to carry out this program in the squadron.

By using all three elements of the Great Start project, our new members will have a great start in CAP.

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## Squadron Responsibilities

You should become familiar with the Great Start project elements: The greeter, the Great Start booklet, the mentor and the new member checklist. This Great Start Squadron Guide describes these elements in detail.

Because the Great Start booklet is written as a guide for a member to share with those that take the time to visit your squadron, the booklet is not designed to be used at air shows or recruiting booths (there are other products that are better for those events).

To maximize the potential for success at your squadron, you should assign at least two active members to this project: a greeter and a mentor. Their responsibilities are described below.

CAP loses many of its first year members. Your squadron should host an informal gathering of your new members, at least twice per year. This gathering allows for your new members to discuss their contributions to the community through CAP. You will discover that this special time together will help you, too, as you listen to your new members – their feedback is important to your squadron's growth!

There are two major goals for squadron growth that rely on your leadership:

- Create active members
- Renew members.

This easy-to-implement Great Start project will help.

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## The Great Start Booklet

The Great Start booklet is a quick summary of CAP's programs and answers many of the frequently asked questions that prospective members raise.

When sharing this booklet with prospective members, keep in mind that these visitors to your squadron have already taken a major step towards our organization – they have taken the time to visit you!

We should value their initial interest by spending a few moments with them, getting to know who they are, what their interests are, and why they wish to volunteer.

Your prospective member can enrich our volunteer organization by the wealth of experiences that they can bring to CAP. Civil Air Patrol is an organization that grows only through its members. As the squadron leader, you have a wonderful opportunity to connect a member of your community with the interests of CAP and your squadron.

The Great Start booklet helps your prospective members to make this connection because CAP is ideally suited for youth and adults who value the following:

- An interest in aviation
- A desire to belong to a worthy cause
- An opportunity to exercise leadership
- A dedication to professional service.

Your prospective members need to know that you are listening to the questions that they have. For this reason, the Great Start booklet should not simply be given to a visitor to read. Rather, a CAP member should guide the visitor through the booklet, allowing your guest to ask questions. Once you share the booklet, the prospective members can keep it for further reference.

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## The New Member Checklist

The Great Start booklet includes a general checklist for senior members. The checklist is designed to:

- Show the prospective members what to expect during their first year of membership
- Assimilate the new members into CAP's training and professional development programs.

Additional checklists are also available. For example, there is a "Pilot Checklist" designed to help a pilot become a CAP mission pilot, and a "Clergy Checklist" designed to help a member of the clergy become a CAP Chaplain.

Don't see a checklist that you need? Create one! Submit your checklist for consideration. Send your checklist candidates to the address listed in the feedback section of this squadron guide.

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## Feedback

We welcome your suggestions and comments! Write or email to:  
Great Start Project  
HQ CAP/PD  
105 S. Hansell St  
Maxwell AFB AL 36112-6332  
[rsmith@cap.gov](mailto:rsmith@cap.gov)

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## The Role of the Greeter

You would be surprised at how often we hear from prospective members that they did not join CAP because when they visited the local squadron, no one talked to them! Your assignment is to provide the initial contact with visitors so they will know that your squadron is welcoming.

### Checklist:

- ☐ Project a positive CAP image (In proper uniform and grooming standards).
- ☐ Greet your visitors with a positive attitude!
- ☐ Introduce yourself and call the visitors by their name.
- ☐ Answer questions that the visitors may have (If you can't answer a question, find someone who can).
- ☐ Introduce the visitors to your squadron commander and to the Great Start mentor.

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## The Role of the Mentor

You have a key role in the Great start project! Your assignment is to:

- Guide the prospective member through the Great Start booklet
- Help the prospective member to join
- Guide the new member's first year using the new member checklist.

Take some time to read through the Great Start booklet and new member checklist now, so that you will be better prepared when visitors arrive at your squadron.

### Checklist:

- ☐ Project a positive CAP image (In proper uniform and grooming standards).
- ☐ Introduce yourself and call the visitor, now your prospective member, by his/her name.
- ☐ Inquire as to how he/she learned of CAP.
- ☐ Inquire as to why he/she was interested in joining CAP.
- ☐ Capture contact information of the prospective member.
- ☐ Provide unit information (included unit history, calendar of upcoming events, meeting time, meeting location, any other pertinent information).
- ☐ Guide the prospective member through the Great Start booklet.
- ☐ Answer any questions that the prospective member may have (If you can't answer a question, find someone who can).
- ☐ Guide the prospective member through the new member checklist.
- ☐ Guide the prospective member to join without pressure or over-promising.